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## IN MEMORIAM: DANIEL BONBRIGHT

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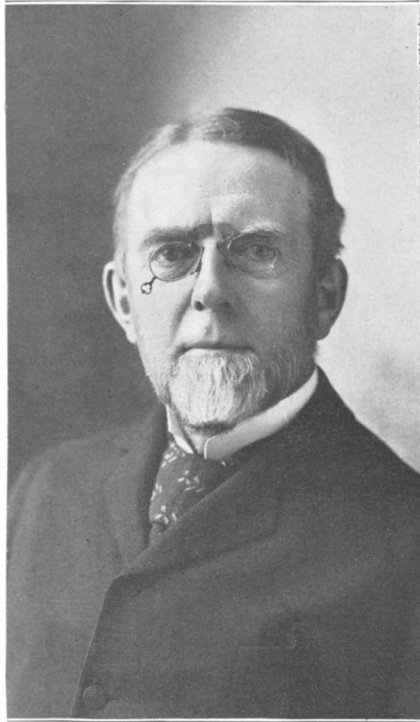
By O. F. LONG  
Northwestern University

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On November 27, 1912, Daniel Bonbright, head of the Department of Latin in Northwestern University, passed away after a brief illness at Daytona, Fla. He had long been a member of the American Philological Association, also of the Managing Committee of the American School in Rome, in fact almost from its inception. His distinguished services as an active teacher of Latin in one university had covered a period of fifty-four years, and his passing fitly merits the wider notice of the pages of this *Journal*.

Professor Bonbright was born in Youngstown, Pa., March 10, 1831. He studied at Dickinson College in 1846-48, and then transferring to Yale College, he was graduated from that institution in 1850, receiving his second degree in 1853. From the first his bent was in the line of teaching. After two years' experience in minor schools, he was called to Yale College as tutor, first in mathematics, 1854-55, and the following year in Latin. In this position he was brought into the intimacy of professional relations with his former teachers, Professors James Hadley, Thomas Thacher, and W. D. Whitney. What ideals he personally cherished, and what ambitions were aroused by closer contact with these great pioneer scholars, may be inferred from his deciding next to join the small group of American students who were then turning to the German universities for advanced work. A letter of President Woolsey's, written in 1856, to the trustees of Northwestern University, then but recently founded, dwells upon the scholarly ideals of the young tutor. Building certainly wiser than they knew, the trustees invited tutor Bonbright to become Northwestern's first professor of Latin, and they readily granted him permission for study abroad before assuming his work.

It is difficult with our numerous graduate schools for the present generation to realize what heart of oak and triple brass must have



DANIEL BONBRIGHT

strengthened the resolve of those who more than a half-century ago went to German universities as a preparation for teaching. American classical scholarship has happily profited by the courage and foresight of a few chosen men who were thus inspired. To this select group Professor Bonbright belonged. With a modesty that was even excessive, he spoke but seldom of his own career, but on a memorable evening in 1905 he gave to a group of graduate students an account of those German days, when he heard, among others, the lectures of Jahn, Ritter, and Ritschl at Bonn, of Bopp, Haupt, and Mommsen at Berlin, and of Sauppe and von Leutsch at Göttingen. With Hermann Sauppe his relations were closer than those of student and professor; the two maintained a correspondence for some years, and there hangs upon the walls of his late study a photograph of Sauppe, bearing the significant inscription:

Den Fuss im Festen,  
Den Blick zum Besten.

In the autumn of 1858 Professor Bonbright assumed his duties in Evanston, bringing to a small western college an endowment of scholarly training such as few older institutions in America could boast in that day. His interest in the College and in the community was broad, and at once his influence was felt in every line of work. Even for material growth he was often directly responsible, while in the darker days that came his loyalty was unswerving. More than one call to better known colleges he received and declined, with the plea that he was needed where he was. As the University grew no one surpassed him in zealous service and wise counsel; for deliberation and judgment he had in rare degree, and the crowning glory of old age, influence, was his long before the passing years had begun to mark him. And he was ever a willing counselor for the many who sought his advice, frank, direct, and unpretending. He had even the simplicity of greatness. Tender and pure, yet firm and uncompromising, he was a man of singularly peaceful temperament. He never broke even a friendly lance for the excitement of the encounter, but when Truth bade him speak he was her fearless and effective champion.

It is now an open secret that more than once Professor Bonbright declined the presidency of Northwestern, preferring to devote

himself to what he considered his legitimate work. For one period, however, he did serve as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and from 1900 to 1902 he was Acting President of the University. In fitting recognition of his merits Northwestern conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. in 1908, thus honoring his jubilee anniversary. Lawrence University had conferred the same degree in 1873.

According to Professor Bonbright's conception, the highest duty of a teacher lies in his service to the students and to the community. In his teaching he was authoritative and punctilious, yet always sympathetic. Unsparing in upholding standards, he was at the same time quick to discern latent ability in even the most unpromising source. The freshness of his interpretations, the wealth of illustration drawn from wide travels and from excursions into various literatures, brought to the student new ideals of culture. No groping uncertainty, or slovenliness of expression in rendering a choice passage was tolerated. His own versions were remarkable for their finish and grace. The English of even his conversation was unvaryingly, and it may be said without disparagement of others, conspicuously that of a cultured scholar.

As a teacher Professor Bonbright was keenly alive to the necessity of a suitable apparatus. In the growth of the Library he was especially interested, and it was through his advice that the important classical and philosophical library of Johann Schulze, a member of the Prussian ministry of public instruction, was brought to Northwestern in 1870. His own library is well selected and fairly extensive, and is the collection of a scholar abreast of progress at home and abroad. It was clearly the sweet serenity of books that made the strongest appeal, for he was a student and scholar of culture rather than an investigator in the modern sense. So far as the writer knows Professor Bonbright never published a line. In this single respect the example of his life, according to the strictest letter, cannot be urged upon the present generation; and yet his service towers high above the too often restricted influence of a specialist, and he lives imperishable in the larger life of a university and in the praise of literally thousands whom he trained and inspired.